

ENGLISH LITERATURE MAJOR AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN INDONESIA: EXPECTATION AND REALITY

Criscentia Jessica Setiadi, S.S., M.A.¹ and Paramita Ayuningtyas, S.Hum., M.Hum.²

English Literature as a major is offered by 179 universities in Indonesia as recorded in the Indonesia's Ministry Research Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia. The dilemmatic combination of the phrase is fundamental to this research since the English language seems to outweigh the study of literature itself due to the Indonesian context (EFL – English as Foreign Language setting) where mastering the language is seen as beneficial in many ways. In the light of this matter, there are two research questions asked: (1) the expectations from the students and (2) the reality in practice which are read with quantitative approach. The data are gathered from English Literature students from one sample university by using questionnaires, emphasizing on their outlooks and experiences in the teaching/learning environment of the major. It is found that there is still traditional understanding about English Literature major among the participants. 72% of the respondents are well informed of what they are studying and 50% has targeted dream jobs or feels the English degree will benefit them in future occupations. The further research may cover university's role in occupation worlds in relation to the outcome of this research and the demands of the modern world.

Keywords: English Literature, Undergraduate, Indonesian Context

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is without doubt a country that takes English as foreign language; and English language learning has been applied to students at any level of education in Indonesia. In regards to English language learning, many researches are revolving around teaching English, and for some cultural coverage, teaching English using literary works. Nevertheless, there are little researches on teaching English literature as a subject in Indonesian context, especially when many of Indonesian universities offering the program. This research will be significant to both English literature and teaching fields, for the scarcity of the combination of these topics in Indonesia is definite.

¹Bina Nusantara University, Email: csetiadi@binus.edu

²Bina Nusantara University, Email: ayu.palar@gmail.com

The most recent research on Indonesian context English literature teaching is from Novianti (2016) where she wrote to point out the gap, attempting to shed some light on teaching and learning of English literature in the undergraduate level in Indonesia. In her research, she observed one of state universities' English department, and used the teaching literature framework from Carter & Long (1991) of which I think is still putting forward the English language teaching and use literary works as tools. The outcomes of her research are mostly the problems faced in teaching-learning English literature which are: the students are not avid readers, many of the lecturers are from English education majors, and resources are scarce.

Another similar research in teaching English literature within ESL environment is from China by Yin & Chen (2002). The problem they faced is the demand from the parents and society that see English (language) is important for future career, but not English literature. This squeezed out literature from their first two years of study, leaving out their third and fourth year to be overwhelmed reading a great number of works in their original forms. Interestingly, we might think that the problems are only faced by countries where English are not the first language (only at different level). Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney (2002) pointed out the importance in having a good level of English language skill before everything else; to be able to understand that Juliet's "O Romeo, Romeo. Wherefore art thou Romeo?" does not mean "Where are you, Romeo?" but "Why are you a Montague?". Let alone, hoping the students to love reading or even perform critical approaches to literary works.

Nevertheless, apparently it is not the students to blame. Yin & Chen (2002) claimed that teaching English literature could be self-defeating and kill the students' interest forever if not handled well. They spread a questionnaire and found 34 percent of the teachers were found boring by the students, mainly because the classes are one-ways (monologue), not two-ways (dialogue). It is due to what it is called as the curse of knowledge, a difficulty that results from knowing something to respond introductory level questions from other people (Froyd & Layne, 2008); and the lack of the preparation. Preparation is the most important aspect that will create a more engaging class. Apart from the curse of knowledge and teacher's preparation, Yin & Chen suggested that teachers need to always improve their teaching methodology. Yet, they did not mention about a specific teaching methodology to apply in teaching English literature in ESL/EFL setting.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data are gathered from students of the English Literature Study Program in Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia. There are 45 students who took part in filling in the questionnaire with the total of 10 close- and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions are used for quantitative measurement, while open-ended questions are used for qualitative measurement to support their quantitative answers. The analysis will be done by running through each of the questions and phrasing the answers in the form of pie charts and the open-ended ones.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts namely 1) Aspiration, 2) Expectation, and 3) Experience. The Aspiration part is to know how, when, and where they first heard about English major and what they had in mind when they decided to enroll one. The Expectation

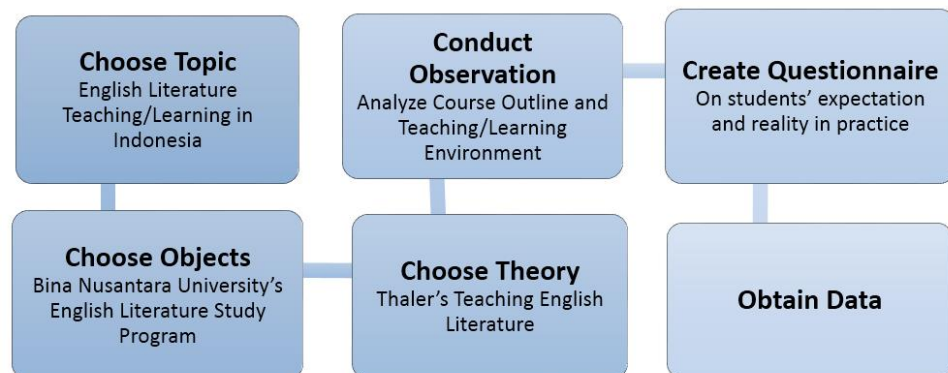
part is what they thought they would learn in the English major; and the last one Experience part is to show the reality in practice, whether the English department has reached their expectation or not. Also, whether the students have a say on further improvement in the English department based on their experience.

Below here are the flowcharts of data compilation and data analysis:

2.1 Data Compilation

In order to obtain the data, these are the process as per diagram below:

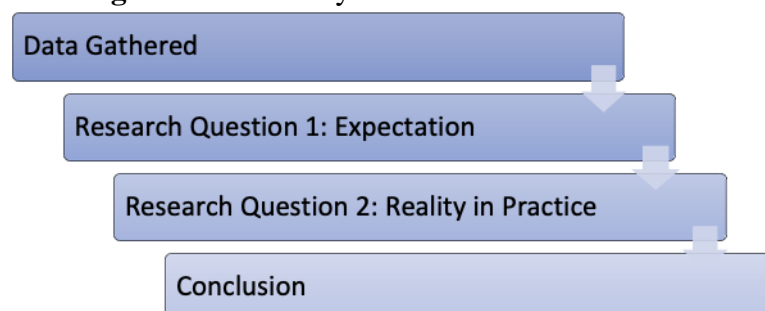
Figure 1 Data Compilation Flowchart



2.2 Data Analysis

There are many factors to observe within the people engaging in a class: the students and lecturers. English proficiency of the students will be tested as the basic database on the demography of the classroom. Then, students will be given a questionnaire regarding their views on English literature major and classes they have taken/are taking. The outcome of this data will be used as the benchmarks in observing the suitability of the materials and learning strategies used in class. Material selection observation can be both seen from the syllabi and classroom observation (for lecturers often have the freedom to choose their own materials based on the topics). The findings will then be analysed by using the understanding of learning Literature from Ben Knight's book *Teaching the New English*.

Figure 2 Data Analysis Flowchart



3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This interdisciplinary research is very personal to us because of three things: our own experience as English literature students, our education background, and our work experience. As graduates from Indonesian-setting English literature major, we can say that many problems mentioned in the background of study are what we experienced so we have clear ideas of why this research must be conducted. Based on these experiences, firstly, we want to break the myths that most of the Indonesian society thinks of us as: (1) an English course, (2) girly, and (3) having limited career paths. Secondly, we want to make sure the students can have enough readings materials, improve their critical thinking skill, and are ready to pursue further education when they wish to. Lastly, I want to give the students proof and more chances that English literature major is not boring and hard to understand; that literature is the heart of history and humanities in the world dominated by technology advancement.

The goal of this research to encourage improvement on teaching/learning environment and strategies for English Literature students in Indonesia with Indonesian context in this digital era. Whereas the function of this research serves as a preliminary research in the eyes of English Literature offered as a study program Indonesia-wide – that is noted to reach 179 programs in total. It is hoped to show light to the prejudice and stereotype toward literary studies in general and English Literature major specifically.

4.0 RESULTS

Due to the nature of the designed questionnaire being close- and open-ended, in this part you will be able to see the quantitative data in pie charts and the analysis in context of the figure to follow.

The data collection process is done in March until July 2019 and the recapitulation is finished by August. There are 45 students of English Literature study program from Bina Nusantara University that joined and were willing to fill in the questionnaire given. These 45 participants are of different cohorts and sexes, but the highlight is not of those but of being English Literature major students. The demography is only for extra information in case there are further researches.

Figure 3 Demography

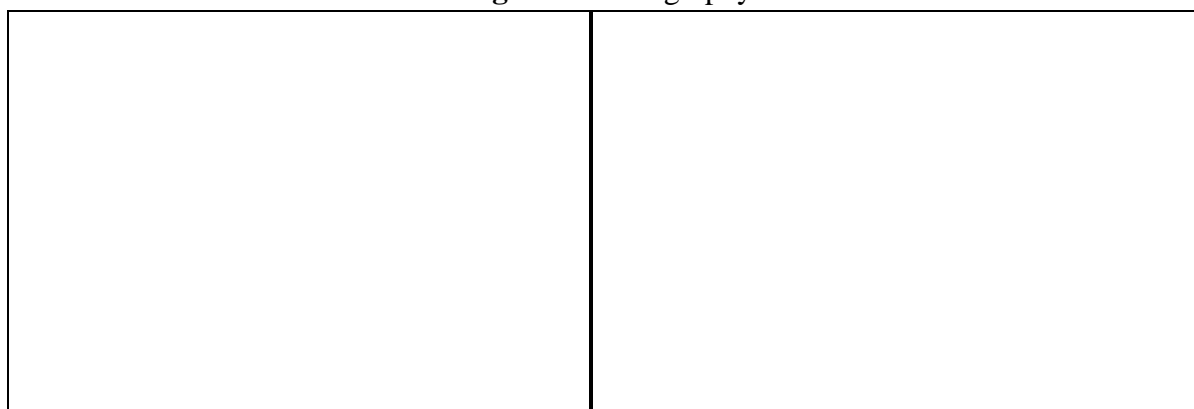
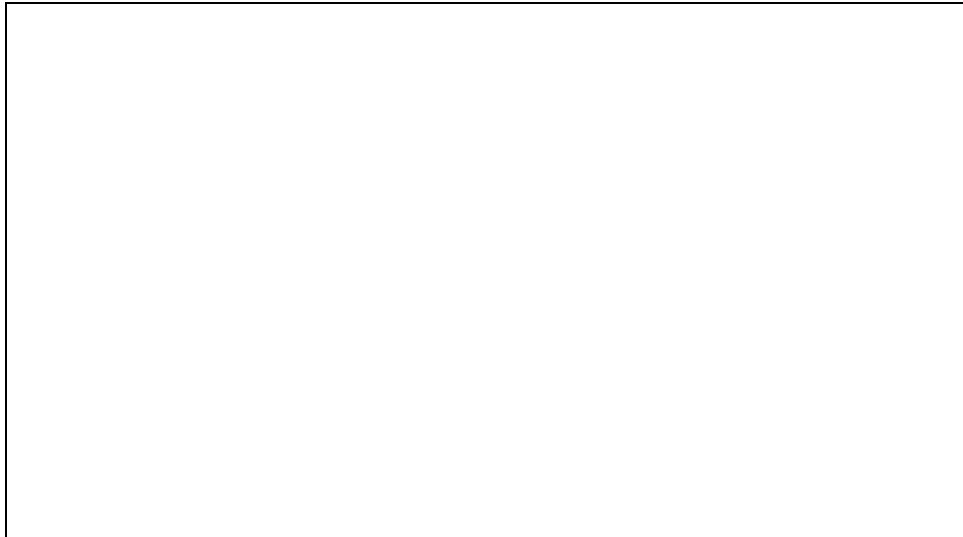
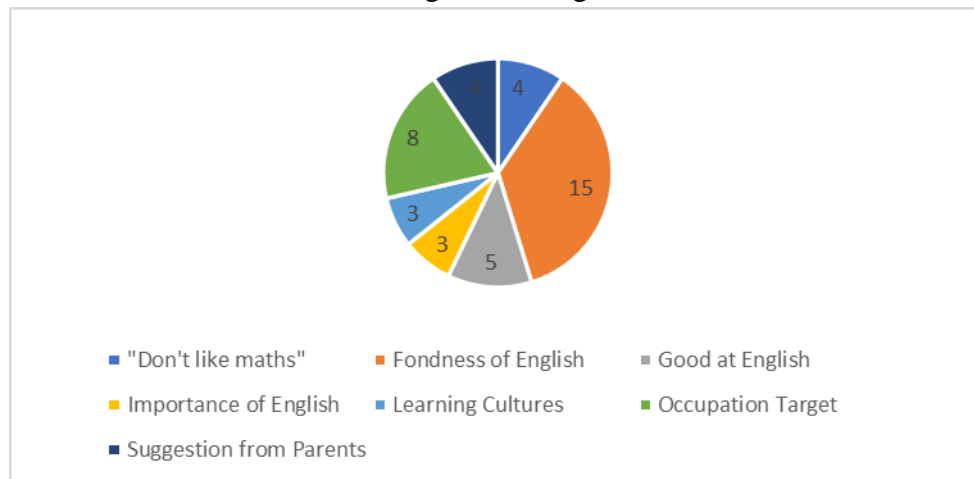


Figure 4 Question 1: Where do you hear/find out about English Literature major?



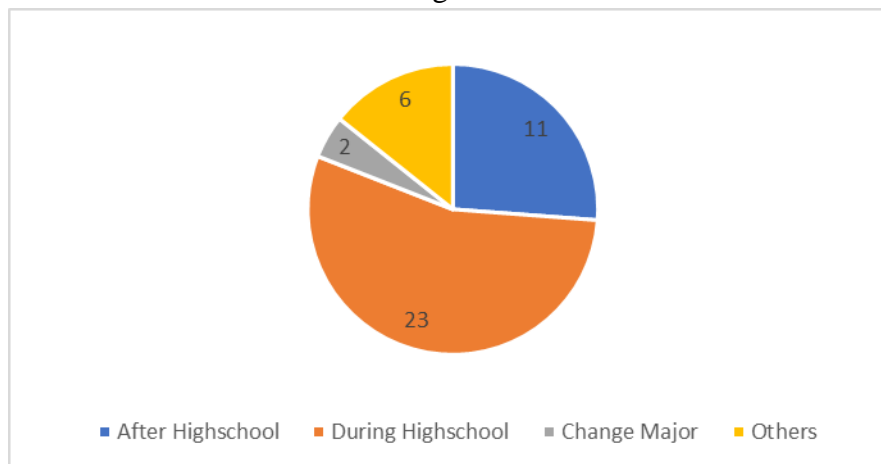
This next part will analyze and discuss the data gained from the questionnaire and summarized in pie charts. The pie chart in figure 3 shows the result of question number one “Where do you hear/find out about English Literature major?”. This question is to find out from where the respondents got information about English Literature major. For this question, respondents are allowed to give more than one answers. As pointed out by the chart in figure 3, family and relatives and media (such as internet, TV, and program book) seem to have a significant role in spreading the information about English Literature major. The respondents also found out about English Literature major from their friends (9 answers) and 15 answers show that they know English Literature major as their university of choice.

Figure 5 Question 2: What makes you think / brings you to English Literature as your undergraduate degree?



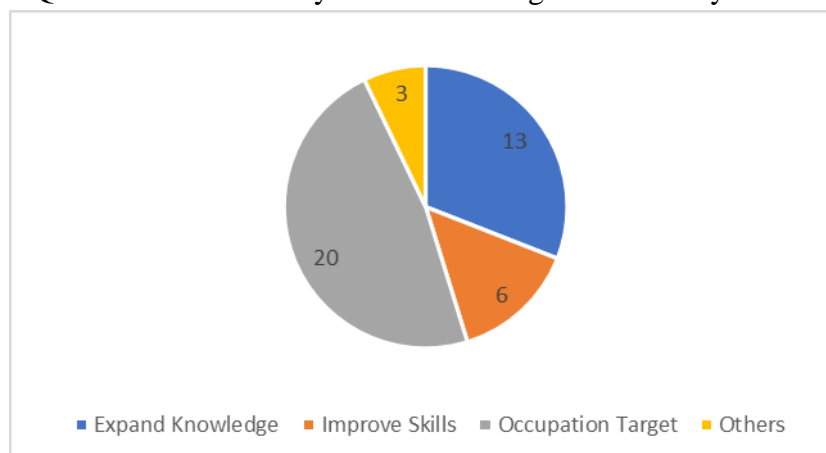
Question number two focuses on the respondents’ reason to choose English Literature major as their undergraduate degree. The result as summarized in figure 4 indicates that 15 students chose English Literature because of their personal fondness of English. Only eight students who answered that they chose English Major because they want to have a career related to English. The data in figure 4 also interestingly show how four students (about 10 percent of the total answers) opted for English Major because they dislike Math.

Figure 6 Question 3: When did you want / decide English Literature as your undergraduate degree?



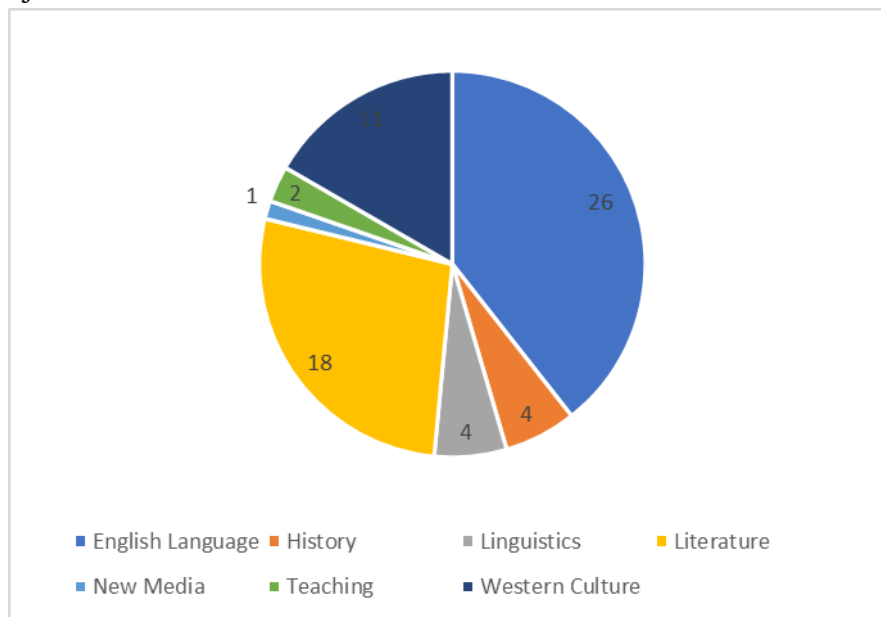
Related to their reason in choosing English Literature major, question number three would like to know when the respondents chose English Literature as their undergraduate degree. 23 students have made their decision during high school, 11 students after high school, and two students switched from their previous major to English Literature. Six students offered various answers; one of which said that she chose English Literature when she had no option left, indicating that English Literature is her last resort.

Figure 7 Question 4: What did you think this degree will take you / benefit you?



The next part will discuss questions number four and five which are related to the students' initial expectations before enrolling for English Literature major. It is expected that the result of the data analysis will give enlightenment to this research's first problem formulation. In question number four, we would like to find out more about their initial expectation about English Literature. We wanted to know what they thought their degree will take or benefit them. As illustrated in figure 7, 20 students answered that they thought by taking English Literature, they could get a job that they wanted. This signifies that they understood the importance of English for their future career. Meanwhile, 13 respondents expected that by learning in English Literature major, they could expand their knowledge and six students expected to have their skills improved.

Figure 8 Question 5: What do you know/understand/think that you will learn in English Literature major?



The next question still deals with what the students know about English Literature. For question number five (in figure 8), the result indicates that 26 students think in English Literature major they will learn English Language, including grammar and English skills like writing and speaking. The rest of the respondents answered Literature (18 students), Western culture (11 students), Linguistics (four students), History (four students), Teaching (two students), and New Media (one student). Pie chart in figure 6 shows how career is still a significant consideration for students when determining their major, and pie chart in figure 7 illustrates how more than a half of the respondents initially thought they will learn mainly English language in English Literature major.

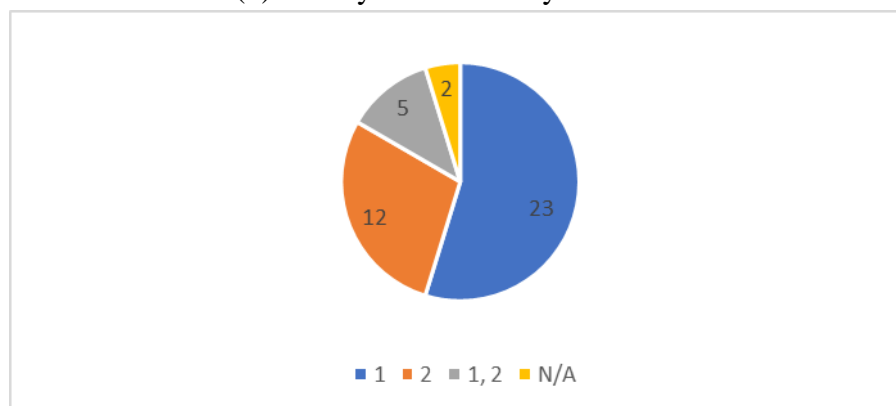
Next, question number 6 (Aside from what you know/understand/think, what do you further expect of what you will learn in English Literature major?) tries to explore the respondents' further expectation about English Literature major. The answers are various, but most of the answers show how they expect to learn not only the language skills but also other knowledge and skills such as literary criticism, philosophy, culture, journalism, history, and teaching skills. Related to their future choice of career, three students answered that they expect to learn further about how to be a good English teacher. Furthermore, one student also stated that "this degree will enable [sic] me how to write properly, learning the structure of writing, study the history of English, and how to enhance your critical thinking, which will benefit of my passion to be a good writer" It is interesting to see how the result for question number 5 shows the students' initial expectation in English Literature major is to learn English language (we assume the grammar and English proficiency skills), yet they later expect they can learn further about other English-related knowledge and skills but not necessarily the language.

This research expects to find and analyze the gap between students' initial expectation before enrolling and the reality in practice when they are studying in English Literature major. The result of questions number 7 (Your experience in English Literature major similar to: (1) What you KNOW/UNDERSTAND/THINK you'll learn (2) What you EXPECT you'll

learn), 8 (What is similar? – in relation to number 7), and 9 (What is different? – in relation to number 7) will further explore about this particular problem.

The pie chart in figure 9 illustrates the respondents' answer to the question whether their experience in English Literature major is similar to what they understand/think/learn or to what they expect they will learn. The majority of the participants (23 students) agree that their experience matches what they know/understand/think about English Literature major. Meanwhile, 12 students think that their learning experience is similar to their expectations about what they will learn. Only five students chose both answers, and two prefer not to answer. It is important to note that the participants are from four different cohorts; therefore, they might have different learning experience, particularly their exposure to different subjects.

Figure 9 Question 7: Your experience in English Literature major similar to:
(1) What you KNOW/UNDERSTAND/THINK you'll learn
(2) What you EXPECT you'll learn

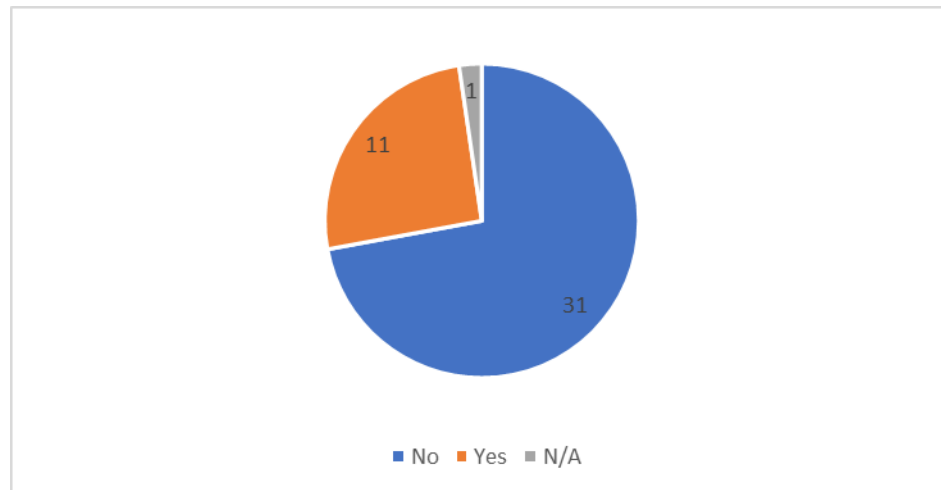


We further examine in what way they think their experience is similar to their initial understanding about English Literature in question number 8. A male student from 2020 cohort said that his experience is so far similar to his initial understanding that he would learn about English language. Other participants also stated that they expected to study grammar in English Literature, and they are learning about it in a subject called Language in Use (which actually pays more importance on how to use English in different contexts, instead of the traditional teaching method of grammar that focuses merely on the structure).

On the other hand, question number 9 would like to find out in what way they think their experience is different from their expectation. Again, since this is an open question, the answers vary yet we can conclude that the participants did not expect to get 'extra' subjects such as Desktop Publishing and Imagining Me. Desktop Publishing is actually a subject offered by English Literature in Binus in order to bridge the gap between language lesson and technology development. In this course, students are provided with skills to create content for digital media. Another subject considered as extra is Imagining Me which again highlights the skill to communicate (in written or spoken form) in the digital world. Imagining Me also includes business and commercial elements in the topics. We can see how some students' initial understanding about English Literature is still old-fashioned (only about the language), so they were surprised when they found out that English Literature major in Binus also offers subjects related to digital media. Another problem that we can identify from the participants' answers to question number 9 is that the lack of depth in the subjects. One participant pointed

out that “The difference is some subjects are compiled into one. Thus, it is not deep.” Another stated that “Most of the subjects (in my opinion) only scratch the surface but don't delve deep and I didn't learn much about translating theories.” Unfortunately, the respondents did not elaborate which particular subjects. However, this is an important issue since it clearly demonstrates the gap between what students’ expect about the subjects and what they actually experience in classrooms.

Figure 10 Question 10: Is there anything that can be developed to reach your expectation?



The last question tries to bridge the aforementioned gap by asking participants whether there is anything in English Literature that can be developed to meet their expectation. The pie chart in figure 9 shows that 31 students answered ‘no’, 11 students said ‘yes’ and one student prefers not answer. We are going to focus on the ‘no’ answers and the elaboration of the answer. Related to the lack of depth discussed in the previous paragraph, two participants explained that they expect further explanation about each subject so their understanding about the topics could be deeper. Other students also anticipate more subjects about literature that particularly deal with creativity, as shown by this answer: “Yes, I think the department can start to open more art class like theatre, poems, so students can express their personality through literature”. In contrast, one student expects English Literature major to focus more on lessons that will prepare students for their future career. Although more than half of the participants are already satisfied with the courses offered by English Literature major, we think the students who answered ‘no’ also need to be heard in order to find out the most effective and relevant syllabus and learning strategies for English Literature major in the world dominated by technology advancement.

5.0 DISCUSSION

In the previous subchapter of Teaching Literature in EFL context, it is rather obvious that there are many aspects in Literature teaching from future career to teacher’s preparation. Nevertheless, the phenomenon that we might think only happen in EFL countries, also happens in UK & US. Knights suggests that there are shifts that make the orientation of students attending college or pursuing a degree lead to career choice and “competitive CV” (2017, p.1). Nevertheless, what Knights also agrees on is that teaching literature does not stop at the subject as a singular matter, but there are just about many factors surrounding what

creates a great English literature teaching/learning experience: saying, “scholarship and transmission” on one hand, and “varieties of culture intervention” on the other (p.3). There are two main things this research will want to look at by using the view of Knight’s while looking at the research problems respectively: (1) genres of pedagogy, and (2) the teacher’s experiences.

Pedagogy is the theory and practice of teaching; and seminars, lectures, tutorials, and workshops are the constitution of genres that are meant in this part. Knights argues that these genres play part in teaching literature for students to learn the rhetorical and intellectual confidants, to form linear arguments (p.6). He also claims that there are still though complaints heard from students and reading groups, hoping to go out of their reading material and go for a decent discussion. Where in these kinds of practice, literature students earn the ability to be the “intercultural agents” (p.7) and “the authority of the teacher constantly struggles with the implied or overt accusation of wasting time” (p.8). With these claim in hand, it can be seen that the choice of genre of pedagogy plays significant role in order to build a more linear conversation in the teaching/learning environment where the students can enjoy and the teachers have the authority to create the discussion. It is also clear that the students have expectation toward the teachers’ way of teaching in classroom.

In relation to the genres of pedagogy, the teacher’s experiences hold the other role in English literature teaching. Knight points out the uniqueness of literature study where discussions play the biggest role in teaching/learning environment. As teachers, they bring the curriculum into the classroom and open the unknowing in forms of discussion where the students are expected to conduct the dialogue further that leads to great ideas and unveiling questions (p.12). Discussions might not be the only genre affordable in classroom today, where digital era resides and sets different standards. Pedagogy seems to be more authorized as Knight mentions the objection by teachers of having the “right” pedagogy to use in their classroom (p.13). This either creates either opposition or support to Yin & Chen’s claim that suggests the literature teaching is dependent to the teacher’s preparation (2002).

This research will be looking at the factors that affects English literature subjects teaching by observing the students, lecturers and, curriculum in English literature major of undergraduate levels in Indonesia. The observation will mainly focus on the effectiveness of students & lecturers’ roles in English literature classes. The analysis of the data shows that there is still this traditional understanding about English Literature major among the participants. They believe that in English Literature major they will learn about the language. In practice, they also learn other subjects, such as literature, philosophy, entrepreneurship, and digital writing. The initial step that can be done to bridge the gap between what Indonesian society in general think about English Literature major and the reality in practice is to educate society and potential students about the curriculum, the courses offered, and the possible career options.

This study will be helpful for giving the perspective of what the students of English department had in mind before, during, and after experiencing their time as English major students. It is found that 72% of the respondents are well informed regarding the content and 50% has targeted dream jobs or feels the English degree will benefit them in future occupations. Nevertheless, the gap of the other 28% and 50% need to be paid attention to as well. The further research may cover the questions of non-regular students who ended up

picking English major but struggling in their studies. Other ideas might cover a larger scale of university's role in occupation worlds.

6.0 CONCLUSION

There are indeed many aspects and factors to look at in relation to English literature teaching. Chambers & Gregory introduced their book *Teaching & Learning English Literature* (2006) as something that they need to do because the English studies are “in crisis”. They include the rising number of higher educations with no commensurate increase in the resource for teaching and other global causes. From the previous discussion alone, it is ranging from the students (interests, English proficiency, & reading habit), lecturers (education background & curse of knowledge), materials (the selections & availability), teaching methodology, facilities (tangible and intangible), to future career. In Dewi & Setiadi's *Language Attitude and Language Choice in Bilingual Academic Learning Environment* (2018) in the case of Bina Nusantara University, it is found that the students' attitude towards the English language is positive, where the students prefer to use English for writing, reading, and listening. Nevertheless, it is also found that the language used as classroom delivery are mostly preferred in Indonesian, out of comfort; and the students also prefers to use Indonesian speaking-wise inside and outside the classroom.

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